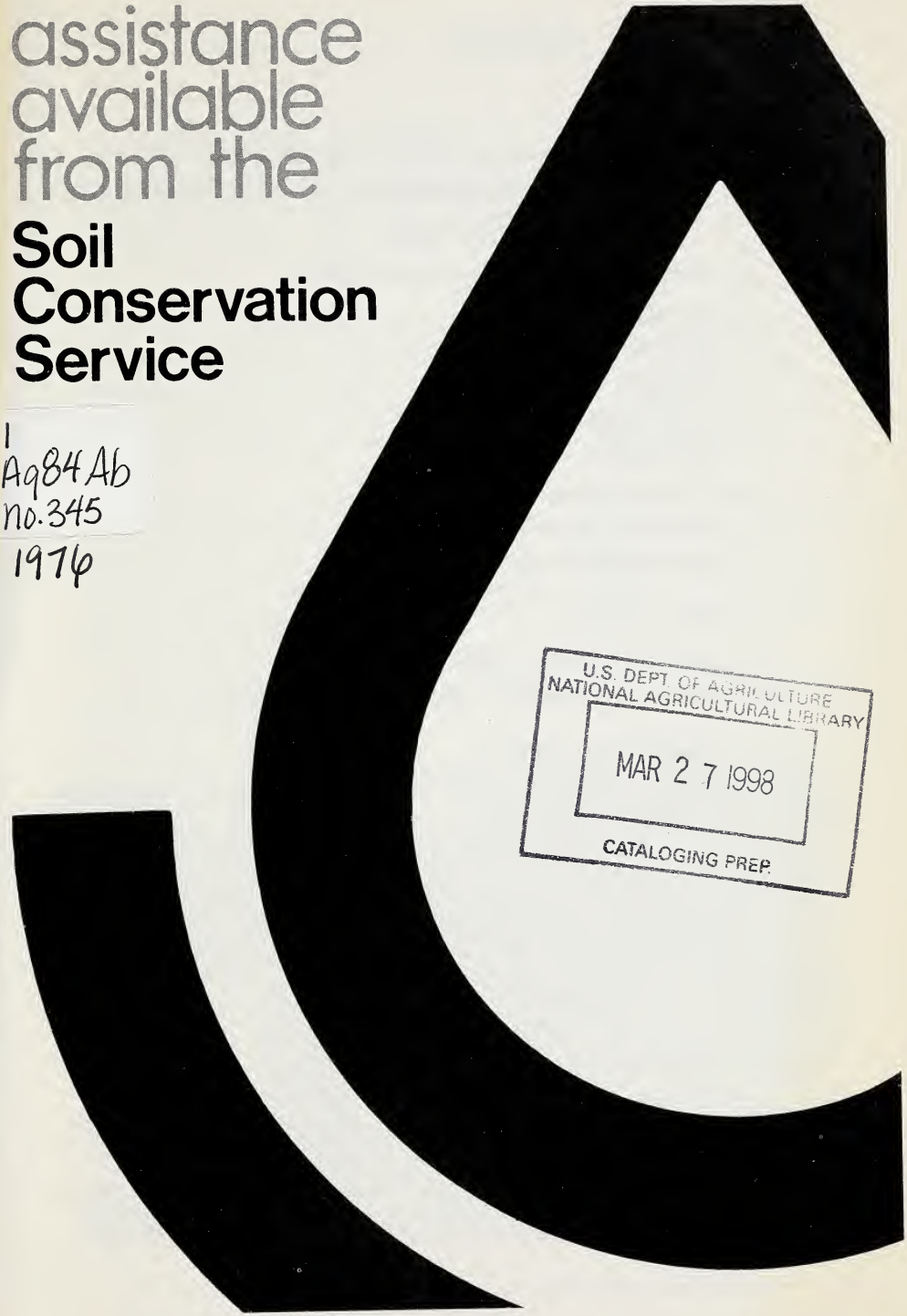
assistance available from the Soil Conservation Service



United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Service

Agriculture Information Bulletin 345

CONTENTS

assistance available from the Soil Conservation Service

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) gives technical assistance to individuals, groups, organizations, cities and towns, and county and state governments in reducing the costly waste of land and water resources and in putting to good use these national assets. The objective is use and conservation treatment of the land in harmony with its capability and needs.

SCS's technical staff analyzes resource problems and suggests safe uses and treatment. The technical staff includes soil conservationists; soil scientists; economists; agricultural, irrigation, hydraulic, drainage, civil, and cartographic engineers; and agronomists, biologists, foresters, plant materials specialists, range conservationists, geologists, landscape architects, and resource planning specialists.

Land users avail themselves of these technologies through the onsite assistance they receive from a specialist developed by SCS—the soil

ME—10,222

SCS conservationists help city and county officials plan and carry out conservation measures.

conservationist—a professional skilled in applying the combined methods of the physical, biological, and social sciences to practical problems of land users.

The soil conservationist helps people develop land use plans. He helps them plan how to use their natural resources to meet their own needs within the framework of the SCS mission: the conservation, development, and productive use of soil, water, and related resources so that all people may enjoy quality in the natural resource base for sustained use, quality in the environment for satisfying places in which to live, work, and play, and quality in the standard of living based on community improvement and adequate income.

SCS was established in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by the Congress in 1935 to plan and carry out a national program to conserve and develop our soil and water resources. More specifically the Soil Conservation Service—

Develops and carries out a national soil and water conservation program through conservation districts (Public Law 46, 74th Cong., 1935).

Helps develop and carry out watershed protection and flood prevention projects in 11 major watersheds in cooperation with other agencies (Flood Control Act, Public Law 534, 78th Cong., 1944).

Helps develop and carry out watershed protection and flood prevention projects and river basin investigations in cooperation with other agencies (Public Law 566, 83rd Cong., 1954).

Administers the Great Plains conservation program (Public Law 1021, 84th Cong., 1956; amended by Public Law 793, 86th Cong., 1960; extended and amended by Public Law 118, 91st Cong., 1969).

Helps local sponsors develop and carry out multicounty resource conservation and development projects (Food and Agriculture Act, Public Law 703, 87th Cong., 1962).

Helps develop USDA's conservation cost-sharing programs. Is responsible for assisting in the preparation of long-term conservation plans of operation and for most of the permanent conservation practices provided by these programs. Provides technical assistance to participating farmers and ranchers and prepares designs and specifications for work undertaken.

Has primary responsibility for the national cooperative soil survey.

Heads the national land inventory and monitoring activity.

Makes and coordinates snow surveys for water supply forecasting in the West.

Appraises potential for outdoor recreation developments. Helps establish income-producing recreation areas on privately owned land and in public water-based recreation and fish and wildlife areas in watershed protection and resource conservation and development projects.

Gives technical assistance to land users participating in the conservation credit program of the Farmers Home Administration.

Provides technical assistance to communities and units of government on land use planning and helps them in obtaining the needed technical data on land, water, and related resources.

Assistance through conservation districts

SCS helps individuals and groups mainly through conservation districts. These districts are organized under state law by local people. They are managed by an elected and unsalaried board made up of local citizens. SCS is the only federal agency that receives appropriations from the Congress earmarked for assistance to conservation districts.

Each district is legally responsible under state law for soil and water conservation work within its boundaries (usually the same as those of a county), just as a county is responsible for roads or a school district for education. Districts operate under the guidance of a state commission, board, or committee usually appointed by the Governor.

SCS, by written agreement with and at the request of district boards, provides professional conservationists to help plan and carry out the district's long-range conservation program. The districts channel the services of these conservationists to the cooperators—individuals, groups,

MD–30,501

This cement-grouted riprap channel to carry storm runoff was designed by professional engineers on the basis of SCS recommendations for sediment control.

and units of government—and set priorities for the kind and amount of work.

SCS is helping more than 2 million land users who are cooperators with the nearly 3,000 conservation districts throughout the Nation. This help includes:

1. A soil map of the land unit and needed interpretations; a range-site and range-condition map of rangeland; a woodland-suitability map of woodlands.

2. Information about the different safe uses and adapted crops (including grasses, trees, and wildlife) for each kind of soil.

3. Information about conservation measures needed on each kind of soil for each of the different safe uses.

4. Information on the potential and limitations of the different kinds of soil for various uses to help city and county officials, developers, contractors, and builders.

5. Onsite assistance to the land user in making a conservation plan for his land unit and to groups of land users to assist them in treating problems common to the group.

6. Technical assistance in designing, laying out, and checking the construction and maintenance of dams, terraces, and other structures; in selecting plant varieties, seeding methods and rates, and cultural practices to establish grass or trees as planned; and in solving problems that arise in managing pastures, woodlands, or wildlife habitat.

7. Assistance to units of government in inventorying their natural resources and planning for wise use of the resources.

SCS and the districts originally worked mostly with farmers and ranchers. But in recent years because of the demand in nonfarm and urban sectors for services from conservation districts, many states have broadened their district programs or amended the enabling acts to authorize help on all land uses. Thus, SCS and the districts have extended their services to nonfarm rural land users as well as to urban land users. This has been particularly true in areas of rapid urban expansion or changing land use.

Most of the state enabling acts date back to the late 1930's—the first was adopted in 1937—and the early 1940's when the principal objective of the districts was erosion control on farm and ranch land. Some conservation districts because of amended laws now can:

Include towns and cities within their boundaries and extend to town and city residents the right to vote for the district board.

Cooperate with neighboring districts in solving area resource problems and exercise eminent domain for various purposes.

Add representatives of municipal and county governments, industrial water users, and other groups to the state districts commission.

Expand their functions to include conservation and development of all renewable natural resources such as water supply; establishment

WIS—1,365

SCS conservationists can advise farmers on the use of conservation practices such as stripcropping and contouring.

of parks and outdoor recreation areas; protection of open space, greenbelt areas, and scenery; preservation of wilderness areas; development of fish and wildlife habitat; and other activities that enhance the quality of the environment.

Borrow money, issue bonds, and levy taxes based on special benefits, and use state and county funds to pay salaries of their personnel.

Have their board members elected in state general elections and include urban representatives on their boards.

Set up a revolving fund to purchase equipment, trees and other plants, and supplies.

Assistance to urban groups and public service agencies

SCS, through conservation districts, is helping more and more municipal and county officials and planning bodies cope with problems of erosion, water supply and disposal, improper land use, flooding, and sedimentation that affect services to the public.

SCS advises and gives guidelines for controlling erosion on highways, subdivisions, shopping centers, and airports—erosion that clogs streams and reservoirs and increases the costs of water purification and road maintenance. SCS provides information about soils and their limitations or suitability for housing, recreation, waste disposal, road construction, and many other uses. It provides standards for temporary erosion control devices

NEB—2,158

SCS helps ranchers plan conservation practices for their range.

in construction areas and advises on water supply potentials, recreation sites, and resource development trends.

The help available from SCS ranges from advice and consultation to onsite technical assistance. For more information see the following headings: Soil surveys, Watershed activities, Resource conservation and development projects, Recreation, Plant materials, and Wildlife conservation.

Cropland and pasture conservation

Sustained profitable use of land used for rotation crops, pasture, orchards, vineyards, and woodland calls for wise management of soils and vegetation.

To help land users plan the agronomic phase of their conservation program, SCS conservationists give them the latest information about crops and their use and management. They outline alternative cropping uses, conservation treatments, and soil management required to safeguard the soil under different cropping systems.

SCS agronomists develop standards and specifications for cropping systems for different combinations of soil, rainfall, slope, erosion, and other physical conditions. SCS conservationists advise farmers on the use of one or more of 30 agronomic practices for crop, hay, pasture, or orchard land. The practices include conservation cropping systems; no-till, minimum tillage, and other improved tillage methods; efficient use of fertilizers; contouring, terracing, stripcropping; stubble mulching and other uses of crop residue; establishing and maintaining protective vegetation in waterways; and irrigation and drainage as needed for the kind of crops grown.

Range conservation

More than a third of the Nation's area is privately owned rangeland, grazable woodland, and native pasture. This land is used to produce forage for livestock, but it is also important for watershed protection and as habitat for many kinds of wildlife. It is used extensively for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and other kinds of outdoor recreation. It provides the open spaces, wild flowers, and scenery that make the outdoors more enjoyable.

The conservation objective of SCS on the native grazing land is to help land users prepare and carry out a plan of grazing use and management that maintains or improves the production and quality of vegetation; provides adequate returns to the land and management; and maintains or improves wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and the quality of the grazing land environment.

SCS has a staff of range conservationists who help land users identify, inventory, and evaluate their water, land, plant, and animal resources; choose the kinds of management and treatment that insure optimum use of resources; and apply the planned conservation measures.

SCS pioneered the use of range inventory methods that incorporate ecological principles and concepts as well as practical techniques for range management. It has coordinated the range inventory with the national cooperative soil survey so that basic information on range resources can be effectively interpreted from soil survey maps and reports.

Woodland conservation

SCS professional foresters prepare guides and specifications for woodland conservation and train field staffs in correlating woodland conservation practices with complete conservation plans. SCS services are coordinated with those of state forestry agencies to serve the public more effectively.

SCS has made more than 20,000 plot studies to correlate individual soils and groups of similar soils with tree growth. Soil interpretations for woodland use, which include potential site quality and soil-related hazards and limitations, are available to land users for planning woodland conservation for each woodland tract.

Because a large part of forest land is privately owned, conservation districts generally include woodland conservation and forestry services for individual landowners as an integral part of their program. Nearly half of all tree planting on private land is done in cooperation with conservation districts.

Wildlife conservation

The major requirements of all kinds of wildlife, whether in a forest, on a farm, or in an urban backyard, are the same—food, water, and cover. Wildlife can thrive and reproduce in both urban and rural areas if provided with these necessities.

ORE—75,277

Thousands of woodland owners get technical help from SCS. This woodland owner is pruning leader growth on his 4-year-old Douglas-firs.

Habitat suitable for upland game, waterfowl, fish, and other kinds of wildlife can be established on most farms and ranches and on small rural acreages that are not farmed. Song birds, squirrels, and other kinds of wildlife can be attracted to suburban and city homes by planting suitable shrubs and trees in yards.

SCS is the principal agency in the Department of Agriculture that helps private land users with wildlife conservation. In all its activities SCS seeks to improve or establish wildlife habitat. SCS biologists provide technical guidance in wildlife management and train field personnel.

Conservation engineering

SCS programs dealing with soil, water, plants, animals, fish, wildlife, and people and their interrelationships require knowledge and use of many engineering disciplines. These are required in planning and site selection; designing and constructing systems and structures to control erosion and runoff; reducing flooding and sedimentation; providing water supply for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and recreation uses; removing excess water; applying irrigation water; disposing of and recycling agricultural wastes; and abating pollution. Conservation engineering systems must be technically adequate for the purposes intended as well as safe and compatible with the environment.

To accomplish this wide range of engineering objectives, SCS staff includes engineers who are experts in geology, hydrology, hydraulics, soil mechanics, design, drainage, irrigation, erosion control, sanitary engineering, landscape architecture, and construction.

Recreation

Recreation can be the primary use of an area or only part of a multiple-use scheme for rural land. SCS helps land users plan for fish and wildlife production on their land just as it helps them plan for crops, livestock, and timber. Nearly 2 million ponds and lakes have been built on farms and ranches and are used partly as recreation enterprises. Many other conservation practices are also contributing to the interest and beauty of the rural landscape.

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 authorized USDA to help land users develop recreation resources. SCS has USDA leadership in this activity, including liaison with other federal, state, and local agencies that assist with recreation development.

Recreation development can add to a farmer's income and help other businesses as well; it can aid in diverting cropland to a more suitable or profitable use; it can provide an urgently needed service for urban and rural people alike; and it can help improve the economy of a community.

The kind of help that SCS gives depends on the type of enterprise planned by the land users but generally includes:

1. Supplying information on the recreation enterprises suited to the land and on the conservation measures needed for each enterprise.

TEX–51,150

Fishing in a peaceful natural setting can be one of the benefits derived from a conservation plan.

WIS—1,458

SCS helps land users plan for recreation development on their land.

2. Supplying information on kinds of soil and their suitability for trees, shrubs, and grasses and their limitations for roads and trails, building sites, septic-tank absorption fields, and dams to impound water.

3. Appraising the suitability of sites for nature and hiking or riding trails, camping and picnicking, skiing and other winter sports, firebreaks and access lanes, ponds, small lakes, wells, wildlife habitat, parking areas, playgrounds, and shooting preserves.

4. Supplying information on plants and their suitability as protective cover on playgrounds, fields, roadsides, and dams and as wildlife food and cover.

5. Working out a plan with the land user to develop, improve, and manage range and pasture for livestock and big game; farm woodlands for wildlife, hiking, and camping; water supplies; and fish and wildlife habitat and other uses.

6. Working with conservation districts and other local groups in appraising the potential for recreation development in their area and supplying information on the usual costs and returns of the different kinds of enterprises adapted to their area.

Plant materials

About 110 new conservation plants are in large-scale production and use in resource conservation and environmental improvement programs as a result of SCS work with plant materials. These plants are used on farms and ranches for forage and soil building and in suburban and urban areas for erosion control, beautification, and pollution abatement. They help beautify hillsides, roadsides, streambanks, and surface-mined areas as well as hold the soil in place. They provide food and shelter for wildlife and enhance the quality of recreation areas.

These plants are the product of continuous effort by SCS to find new plants that can help solve soil and water conservation problems. In returning eroded land to protective vegetation it was found that in places the commercially available grasses, legumes, trees, and shrubs were not effective. Thus the search among native and introduced plants was started and still goes on.

The first step is to assemble and evaluate plants at the 20 SCS plant-materials centers to determine their range of climatic and site adaptation and their conservation potential.

Plants that show promise for various conservation purposes at the plant-materials centers are increased and field tested. If field testing is successful, the plant materials are increased and released through cooperative arrangements with conservation district cooperators, crop improvement associations, or state nurseries. This program is carried out in cooperation with colleges and universities and other federal agencies. Production of the improved seed or plants in quantities large enough for sale to the public is through commercial channels.

SCS plant-materials centers are open to visitors. Following are their locations: Quicksand, Ky.; Cape May Court House, N.J.; Big Flats, N.Y.; Manhattan, Kans.; East Lansing, Mich.; Elsberry, Mo.; Bismark, N. Dak.; Brookville, Fla.; Americus, Ga.; Coffeeville, Miss.; Knox City, Tex.; Tucson, Ariz.; Lockeford, Calif.; Wailuku, Hawaii; Aberdeen, Idaho; Bridger, Mont.; Los Hunas, N. Mex.; Corvallis, Oreg.; Pullman, Wash.; and Beltsville, Md.

Disturbed area reclamation

SCS agronomists and other scientists also help in planning, establishing, and managing vegetation on disturbed areas or critically eroding sites.

ORE–75,308

SCS, at its plant-materials centers located throughout the country, is continuously searching for new plants that can help solve soil and water conservation problems.

Surface-mined land, coastal sand dunes destroyed by hurricanes, construction sites, gullied areas and "blowouts" caused by accelerated water and wind erosion, areas on which rampaging streams and rivers have destroyed the streambanks and cut new channels, all need to be restored to noneroding stable condition. Many of these areas can be reclaimed for farming or as recreation sites.

Agricultural waste management

SCS provides technical advice and assistance to farmers, ranchers, food processors, and municipalities in managing wastes to protect the environment. SCS helps plan, design, and install systems for managing animal wastes and polluted runoff. SCS helps communities develop environmentally sound methods for disposal of a wide variety of other wastes by recycling through agricultural land.

SCS soil scientists, agronomists, engineers, and other specialists combine their knowledge to arrive at the most acceptable waste management systems. These systems minimize adverse impacts on air, soil, and water quality. They use the natural capacity of soils, plants, microorganisms, sunlight, and oxygen to renovate waste materials, make beneficial use of organic matter, and recycle nutrients through the soil and plant cover. SCS also assists in the conversion of wastes so they can be used for agricultural production.

Soil surveys

Soil surveys are an important tool for farmers and ranchers, city, county, and state officials, land use planners, engineers, contractors, developers and builders, and others in planning use and management of land and water resources.

Congress has authorized (Public Law 89-560, 1966) SCS to make soil surveys in suburban developing areas as well as in agricultural areas. Soil survey information helps planners select land suitable for constructing houses, factories, schools, airports, highways, and shopping centers in expanding urban areas.

Many cities and more than 200 counties throughout the Nation are providing funds to accelerate soil survey work in their area so that their local governments can make better land use decisions. Soil surveys are widely used by public and private land use planners. Soils on more than 1.3 billion acres have already been mapped, and more than 50 million acres are being mapped each year.

Each soil survey describes the key characteristics of soils in the survey area, classifies and names the soils according to a nationwide system, provides information on the potential and limitations of the soils for various uses, and shows the distribution of soils on detailed maps. In

making soil surveys, soil scientists determine the texture, structure, chemical composition, depth, slope, and other features of soils that affect their response to management.

SCS publishes the soil surveys, including maps. In addition, SCS cooperates with agencies that prepare special maps and reports based on soil surveys. All the work is carried out cooperatively with other federal and state agencies, including the state agricultural experiment stations.

Land inventory and monitoring

The Department of Agriculture assisted by other federal, state, and local agencies conducts a program of land inventory and monitoring. The Secretary of Agriculture has assigned leadership for this activity to SCS. The objective is to provide data on the soil, water, and related resources of the United States to help in planning land use, conservation of soil and water, community development, and environmental improvement.

Data are collected on the kinds, amounts, and geographical extent of soil, water, and related resources; the potential and limitations of these resources for various uses; and the changes and trends in the use, extent, and condition of those resources. A report on changes in the quality of resources is called for at 5-year intervals.

MINN—61,042

Soil surveys long useful on farms and ranches are useful in urban areas as well.

Snow surveys and water supply forecasting

In the West most of the water—for agriculture, for industry, for power, for domestic use—comes from snow that falls in the mountains. To determine how much water will be available in summer, snow surveyors measure the water content of the mountain snowpack in winter and estimate the acre-feet of runoff from mountain watersheds.

Several times each winter more than 1,200 snow surveyors measure the snowpack on some 1,900 snow courses in remote and rugged mountain areas of the West and British Columbia. They cover about 100,000 miles on skis, snowshoes, special oversnow machines, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft in the roughest kind of country under hazardous climatic and physical conditions.

Data they collect are translated into water supply forecasts issued monthly by SCS from January to June. City, industrial, agricultural, and recreation water users of the West base their plans for the year's operations on this forecast. During recent years networks of automated radiotelemetry systems have been developed and used at selected mountain sites to collect and transmit snow survey data to central valley stations. As rapidly as funds allow, these networks will be expanded to provide daily information on streamflow potential, which will be especially valuable during periods of flood and drought.

SCS has USDA leadership for conducting the snow surveys in cooperation with other federal, state, and private agencies.

Watershed activities

Rural and urban residents in hundreds of communities have learned that by working together through watershed projects they can help solve their land use and water problems. With federal help they can reduce erosion, siltation, and flooding; supply water for growing domestic and industrial needs; attract new industries; provide for agricultural water management; improve fish and wildlife resources; provide for recreation; recharge ground-water reservoirs; and provide for water quality management.

Watershed projects under Public Law 566, enacted in 1954, establish soil and water conservation measures on private and public land and construct dams and other water control structures on upstream tributaries to insure effective water management. Watershed projects are based on local initiative and responsibility; state review and approval of local proposals and opportunity for state financial and other assistance; and federal technical and financial assistance.

State agencies and qualified local organizations can sponsor a watershed project. These include soil and water conservation districts; municipalities; counties; watershed, flood control, conservancy, drainage, and

irrigation districts; and associations of water users or similar organizations not operated for profit.

SCS administers the watershed program for the Department of Agriculture. It also administers watershed work, authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 534), in 11 major watersheds comprising about 30 million acres.

A watershed project under Public Law 566 is limited to an area no larger than 250,000 acres. Such a project can be multipurpose.

The federal government gives technical help in planning and installing the project measures, pays the full cost of building flood control measures, and shares the cost of other measures. It lends to sponsoring organizations to finance their share of the cost up to a maximum of $5 million per project for a maximum of 50 years at a reasonable interest rate. It also advances funds to develop water supply for future municipal or industrial use amounting to a maximum of 30 percent of the cost of a multiple-purpose reservoir and defers payment for a maximum of 10 years without interest.

Major obligations of local sponsors include acquiring land, easements, and rights-of-way; awarding contracts for construction on private land or electing to delegate contracting to SCS; sharing the construction cost of measures if appropriate; and operating and maintaining the project when completed.

MONT—10,175

SCS snow surveyors measure the water content of mountain snow in the West to determine how much water will be available in summer.

WVA–730

A watershed project can bring new water supply to a community and opportunity for economic growth.

Watershed projects help cities, towns, and rural areas stimulate economic growth. Where projects are developed for multiple purposes, both urban and rural areas benefit. Control of flooding, erosion, and siltation reduces risks in farming, lowers maintenance costs for roads and bridges, reduces reservoir sedimentation, and prevents costly flood damage in urban communities. Water impounded in reservoirs provides opportunity for fishing, boating, hunting, swimming, and other recreation. Reservoirs also supply water for irrigation and for municipal and industrial uses and help communities attract new industries and accommodate future expansion of existing industries.

Probably no investment has a more immediate and positive effect on the economy of a community than a watershed project. A watershed project often acts as a catalyst to a whole rural development endeavor—family farm improvement, higher living standard, soil and water conservation, water resources control, industrial development, commercial expansion, improvement of community facilities, and recreation.

Water resource activities and river basin investigations

SCS directs Department of Agriculture water resource activities that require cooperation with other agencies and with state governments. Public Law 566 provides broad authority for cooperation between USDA and state governments and other federal agencies in river basin planning, surveys, and investigations.

SCS helps survey river basins at the request of cooperating state or federal agencies. Surveys help in coordinating upstream watershed projects, for which SCS has responsibility, with measures taken downstream to solve problems of water resource use and development. Surveys identify water and land resource problems, analyze the economic base and environmental setting of the area, and suggest ways to solve problems and to improve the local economy and environment.

Cooperative river basin surveys and investigations, although authorized by Public Law 566, are not directed specifically toward developing watershed projects. They provide a basis for coordinating resource development and are helpful in guiding upstream watershed activities.

State and local governments need technical data and assistance in identifying flood hazards and preparing programs for flood-plain management. Despite substantial efforts to control flooding, the Nation's flood losses are continually increasing, partly because of unwise use of flood plains.

SCS assists state and local governments by carrying out flood hazard analyses and related flood-plain studies. The studies are requested by local communities and coordinated by the responsible state agencies. A report is prepared that delineates floodprone areas based on the frequency of flooding expected every 10, 50, and 100 years. The report provides state and local planners with a basis for planning and regulating use of flood plains.

Resource conservation and development projects

Speeding up resource programs in multiple-county areas as a base for economic development and environmental protection is the aim of resource conservation and development (RC&D) projects authorized by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 (Public Law 703, 87th Cong.). SCS is responsible for helping local sponsors of these rural-urban projects and for helping to coordinate the assistance of other federal and state agencies in meeting project objectives.

Each RC&D project has its own unique goals, but most aim to:

1. Develop land and water resources for agricultural, municipal, or industrial use and for recreation and wildlife.
2. Provide soil and water resource information for a variety of land and water uses including farming, ranching, recreation, housing, industry, and transportation.
3. Provide conservation measures for watershed protection and flood prevention.
4. Accelerate the soil survey where it complements project measures.
5. Reduce pollution of air and water.
6. Speed up conservation work on public land and on individual farms, ranches, and other private holdings.

NMEX—13,853

Corn is cooked in these outdoor ovens for use in Mexican food products for marketing. SCS through its resource conservation and development projects helps promote the economic development and growth of an area by encouraging industries to process products of the area.

7. Make needed adjustments in land use by converting surplus or poorly suited cropland to a more beneficial use—grass, trees, wildlife habitat, recreation.

8. Improve and expand recreation facilities; promote historical and scenic attractions.

9. Encourage existing industries to expand and new ones to locate in the area and thus create jobs; encourage industries to process products of the area.

10. Improve markets for crops, livestock, and forest products.

11. Improve or bring to the area needed community facilities such as hospitals, schools, sewage treatment plants, and roads.

12. Encourage training programs to improve job skills.

RC&D projects are multicounty in size. Each area is large enough for adequate development of natural resources but small enough for effective local leadership in preparing and carrying out a project plan.

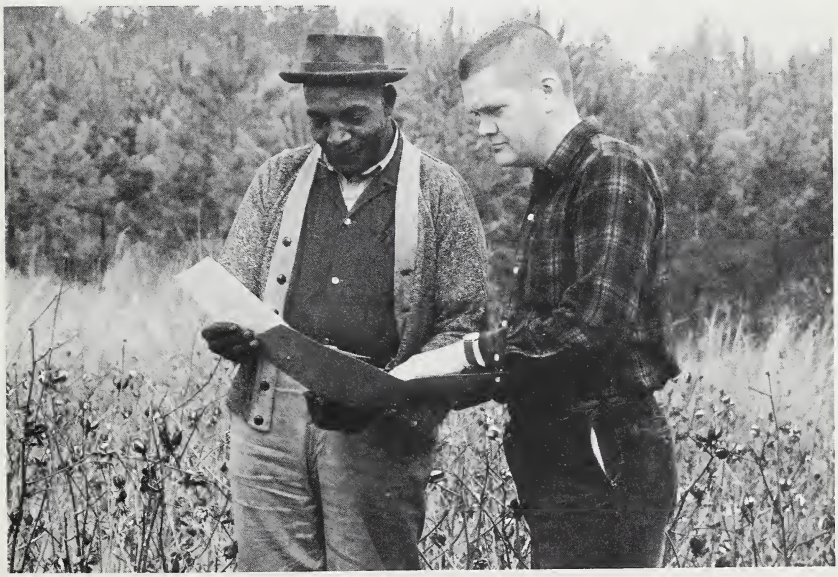
People apply for an RC&D project through local sponsors—conservation districts, county governing bodies, towns, local or state agencies, irrigation districts, public development corporations, and others. If the application is approved by the Governor, it is submitted to USDA. If planning assistance is authorized, SCS names a project coordinator to help the sponsors review the problems and opportunities and develop a plan of action. If the plan is approved, USDA provides technical and financial help in carrying out measures called for in the plan.

Great Plains conservation program

In the Great Plains, a region of severe climatic hazards, various programs have been carried out in the past to meet emergency situations. The Great Plains conservation program, administered by SCS since 1956, aims at bringing about a more nearly permanent solution to problems resulting from drought and the cultivation of land unsuited for sustained crop production. It helps stabilize agriculture and the economy of towns dependent on agriculture in the Great Plains. Local leadership comes from the conservation districts, who have been largely responsible for the promotion and general acceptance of this program.

Under this program, USDA through conservation districts helps participating land users prepare and follow a conservation plan, enabling them to make needed adjustments in land use and to install conservation measures on their land.

Technical assistance and cost sharing help the land users carry out conservation plans over a period not to exceed 10 years. Cost sharing is specifically limited to installing permanent conservation practices and is obligated when the plan is developed and the contract signed. This guarantees the availability of funds to apply the needed practices on schedule and to make any needed changes in land use.



TENN—D49-1

Agricultural conservation programs provide both technical and financial help to farmers who want to apply certain soil and water conservation measures on their land.

Converting land poorly suited for cultivated crops to grassland, reseeding depleted rangeland, and planting trees for forest production have top priority in this program.

The Congress, in November 1969, extended the Great Plains conservation program until December 1981 and amended it to provide federal assistance for measures that improve recreation resources, promote economic uses of land, and help control agriculture-related pollution.

Conservation cost-sharing programs

USDA shares with land users the cost of applying certain soil and water conservation measures. Cost-sharing programs emphasize conservation benefits of national concern. These benefits include preserving, restoring, and improving wetlands as nesting and breeding areas for migratory waterfowl and achieving desirable adjustments in land use. Cost-sharing programs are administered by Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation committees at the state and county levels. County committees accept applications for cost sharing and issue payments after conservation practices have been applied satisfactorily.

SCS helps formulate the programs at the national, state, and county levels and helps carry out certain technical phases. SCS provides technical assistance in preparing conservation plans; determining where conservation practices are practical and necessary; designing, laying out, and supervising installation of the practices; and checking and certifying performance of the practices.

Defense responsibilities

Where land and livestock are affected by radiological contamination, SCS advises farmers and ranchers on selection and use of land for agricultural production; harvesting of crops; use of crops stored on the farm; use, conservation, disposal, and control of water to insure an adequate uncontaminated supply for agriculture and to prevent floods; and safety of livestock.

SCS provides basic soil information, land use guides, and onsite technical assistance in selecting land for production and in applying practices to increase production of food and fiber with maximum efficiency in periods of national emergency.

Natural disaster

SCS provides technical and financial assistance whenever fire, flood, or other natural disaster causes a sudden impairment of watersheds (Flood Control Act of 1950). As authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture, SCS undertakes measures to retard runoff and prevent soil erosion in order to safeguard lives and property from floods and sedimentation.

NIGERIA—648

SCS provides technical conservation assistance around the world, and employees on foreign assignment help train students or conservation workers from developing countries.

SCS provides technical assistance for rehabilitation of land and conservation systems for which the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service provides funds for emergency conservation measures as authorized by Public Law 85-58. SCS provides technical assistance for emergency protection against high water and for rehabilitation of rural land damaged by natural disaster.

International assistance

SCS experience and technical skills have helped advance resource conservation and development in other countries for many years. SCS trains about 400 students or conservation workers from developing countries each year. Many SCS employees, through the Agency for International Development (AID), have taken foreign assignments of 2 years or more to help the developing countries.

SCS cooperates with AID and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in providing technical conservation assistance around the world. SCS conservationists work with officials and technicians of other nations in organizing conservation programs and in training them to work with local people in applying conservation measures. Through training and experience in many countries and the exchange of ideas, a corps of international conservationists is being built.

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